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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT : Language Development Program

1. On 4 February 1969 the Agency's Language Development Program will have its third anniversary. As a result of this program, large numbers of Agency employees have been encouraged to increase and maintain competencies in foreign languages. Many have done so in courses given during official duty hours. Even greater numbers have participated in voluntary off-duty training. For example, during the last fiscal year:

139 employees completed full-time on-duty language courses.

486 employees completed part-time on-duty language courses.

704 employees completed off-duty language courses at Headquarters.

696 employees engaged in off-duty language courses overseas.

13% of the employees taking language training in the U. S. were serving with DD/S components.

2. I believe we can all be pleased with the widespread interest the Language Development Program has generated in foreign language study and with the impressive number of employees engaged in such study. At the same time, however, we must constantly re-examine this program to ensure that the mainstream of effort is responsive to changing Agency requirements. Specifically, I am concerned at the moment by:

a. The relatively small proportion of language students who are attaining really usable levels of proficiency.

b. The high ratio of individuals studying the common European languages and the correspondingly small number, Q26 or even absence, of students studying some of the important Afro-Asian languages.

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For example, in the first two years of the Voluntary (off-duty) Language Program here at Headquarters, of the 1,183 students who completed a trimester of study, 1,055 were in beginning or elementary courses. Only 111 completed intermediate courses, and just 24 finished advanced courses. Over half the students took French or German and another quarter of the total studied Russian or Spanish--leaving only about 25% of the total student group to study all other languages.

3. To enable us to reappraise the Language Development Program in terms of current needs, I have instructed the Language and Area School to step up its proficiency testing program so the Agency's inventory of language skills can be verified. This inventory, which is maintained on machine records by the Office of Personnel, is complete and up-to-date in its coverage of staff employees; but only 75% of the statements of proficiency are supported by tests.

4. Additionally, I have asked the Chairman of the Committee for Language Development to conduct, in consultation with the members of the Committee from each of the major Agency components, a survey of current foreign language requirements in the Agency. The survey will seek to identify the requirements, by language and level of competence, of all staff positions—[REDACTED] in the Agency. With respect to positions overseas, the survey will take into account both the official language of the country involved and any auxiliary languages which may be used in performance of duties. A sample of the questionnaire proposed for use in connection with the survey is attached.

5. I am very hopeful that out of this proposed survey will come a more realistic form of guidance than we have ever had before in planning the Language Development Program. For when the results of the survey can be matched against an accurate inventory of CIA's language skills, we can judge pretty clearly the pace and direction that our over-all language program should take. A compilation of this information by components will also aid materially in the development of long-range training plans by each such component.

6. I would be most grateful for whatever assistance and support you can lend personally in the proposed survey of DDI language requirements.

MATTHEW BARB  
Director of Training

Attachment

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